UNITED NATIONS

Framework Convention on Climate Change

Distr.
GENERAL

FCCC/SBSTA/1998/3
9 April 1998

Original: ENGLISH

SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE
Eighth session
Bonn, 2-12 June 1998
Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

COMMUNICATIONS FROM PARTIES INCLUDED IN ANNEX I TO THE CONVENTION

Issues related to guidelines for preparation of national communications from annex I Parties

Note by the secretariat

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GE.98-60889

I. MANDATE

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), at its first session, decided that the guidelines for the preparation of first communications by Annex I Parties, as contained in decision 9/2 of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at its eleventh session (A/AC.237/55, annex I) would, until further review, be used by Annex I Parties in preparing their communications. By the same decision, it requested the secretariat to prepare a report on the application of the guidelines for the preparation of communications by Annex I Parties with a view, among other things, to enhancing further the comparability and focus of the communications. The report was considered by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) at their third sessions. Taking into account the recommendations of the SBI and the SBSTA on the matter, the COP, at its second session, adopted decision 9/CP.2 relating, *inter alia*, to revised guidelines for the preparation of national communications from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (referred to as the "UNFCCC Guidelines") (FCCC/CP/1996/15/Add.1).

2. The issue was subsequently taken up during the seventh sessions of the SBI and the SBSTA in the discussion on the compilation and synthesis of second national communications from Parties included in Annex I (FCCC/SBI/1997/19 and Add.1), and in the discussion of the document on activities of Parties included in Annex II related to transfer of technology (FCCC/SBSTA/1997/13), respectively. The SBSTA took note of these documents, in particular the annex on methodological issues included in the compilation and synthesis of second national communications. This annex discusses aspects of reporting and conformity with the UNFCCC Guidelines as they pertain to greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories. The SBSTA agreed to consider, at its ninth session, what, if any, additions and/or amendments to the UNFCCC Guidelines would be required, taking into account the results of the methodological work requested from the secretariat and the submissions from Parties on possible approaches for resolving the methodological issues identified in the compilation and synthesis document.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The UNFCCC Guidelines were developed to assist Parties in fulfilling their commitments under the Convention and related decisions of the COP. They relate to national communications, GHG inventories, compilation and synthesis reports of national communications and in-depth reviews of national communications. The three principal purposes of the UNFCCC Guidelines are:

(a) To assist Annex I Parties in meeting their commitments under Articles 4 and 12 of the Convention;

(b) To facilitate the process of considering the national communications, including the preparation of useful technical analysis and synthesis documentation, by encouraging the presentation of information in ways that are consistent, transparent and comparable;

(c) To ensure that the Conference of the Parties has sufficient information, in accordance with Article 4.2(d), to carry out its responsibilities to review the implementation of the Convention and the adequacy of the commitments in Article 4.2(a) and (b).

In the light of the above, it is important that further development of the UNFCCC Guidelines take account of the experience and insights gained from the activities of the Parties and the secretariat related to the UNFCCC Guidelines.

4. The secretariat has prepared, for the eighth session of the SBSTA, a progress report on the ongoing methodological work related to, *inter alia*, greenhouse gas emission inventories (FCCC/SBSTA/1998/4). This report provides an overview of the methodological work under way by the secretariat and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that is relevant to consideration of the UNFCCC Guidelines.

5. The SBSTA may wish to note the request made by the SBI, during its seventh session, that the secretariat evaluate the feasibility of compiling and maintaining available supplementary data from authoritative sources on GHG emissions for the purpose of comparison with the national submissions and present a report on this comparison to its ninth session (FCCC/SBI/1997/21). The report will be relevant to the consideration of the UNFCCC Guidelines.

III. SCOPE OF THE NOTE

6. The purpose of this note is to provide an evaluation of Parties' experience with the UNFCCC Guidelines and to raise questions for consideration with regard to any clarifications, additions and/or amendments to the UNFCCC Guidelines which may be required. The note recalls issues raised in relation to the Guidelines and their application which have been identified in earlier sessions of subsidiary bodies and in documents prepared by the secretariat. It also invites discussion on the need for consideration of the possible timing and nature of further steps, taking into account the ongoing methodological work and submissions from Parties, as well as actions required under the Kyoto Protocol.

7. For planning purposes, the secretariat has assumed that third national communications from Annex I Parties would be due in the 2000-2001 period. The SBI may wish to consider this issue with a view to making a recommendation to COP 4 on the timing of such communications.

IV. EXPERIENCE WITH THE UNFCCC GUIDELINES

A. Background

8. The UNFCCC Guidelines were adopted by the COP at its first session (decision 3/CP.1) and revised by it at its second session (decision 9/CP.2). The design of the UNFCCC Guidelines was intended to assist Annex I Parties in meeting their requirements under Articles 4 and 12 of the Convention. Since their adoption, the original, and subsequently revised, UNFCCC Guidelines have served this purpose in so far as they have been used by Parties for two national communications. The relevant aspects of the UNFCCC Guidelines have also been applied in the reporting of annual GHG inventory data in accordance with relevant decisions of the COP (decisions 3/CP.1 and 9/CP.2). As noted in the compilation and synthesis of the second national communications (FCCC/SBI/1997/19 and Add.1), and in the process of in-depth reviews, adherence to the different sections of the UNFCCC Guidelines has varied in terms of consistency and completeness.

B. Greenhouse gas inventories

9. The section of the UNFCCC Guidelines concerning GHG inventories is fairly detailed, benefiting from the existence of the IPCC Guidelines for National Greenhouse Gas Inventories. This part of the UNFCCC Guidelines has, in general, been followed by Parties and the quality of the information communicated has improved with each subsequent submission. However, the compilation and synthesis of national communications and the in-depth reviews have identified a number of methodological issues related to GHG inventories. These issues suggest a possible lack of clarity in the UNFCCC Guidelines as well as a lack of conformity in reporting by Parties. In addition, issues not previously identified may be revealed in the process of completing the compilation and synthesis of second national communications. The SBSTA, at its fourth session, also noted the need for improvements with respect to some aspects of GHG inventories (FCCC/SBSTA/1996/20).

C. Other aspects

10. The adequacy of reporting by Annex I Parties in relation to national circumstances, projections, policies and measures, vulnerability assessment and adaptation measures, research and systematic observation, financial resources and technology transfer, and education, training and public awareness, has been discussed in the course of in-depth reviews and questions have been raised, by both Parties and the experts, about the use of the UNFCCC Guidelines and their appropriateness. In the process of completing the first compilation and synthesis of second national communications, a number of issues relating to application and lack of conformity with these sections of the UNFCCC Guidelines were identified. These included, in particular, projections and the effects of measures. The document on activities of Parties included in Annex II related to the transfer of technology (FCCC/SBSTA/1997/13) also identifies a lack of conformity with the UNFCCC Guidelines and reporting tables in some areas.

11. The lack of conformity with the UNFCCC Guidelines in these areas results, in part, from the nature of Parties' institutional structures. The methods used by Parties for the estimation of activities in these areas have varied due to a number of factors, which include a lack of national data and/or unclear definitions and terminology in the UNFCCC Guidelines. A common approach for identifying information in accordance with particular formats was not uniformly applied by Parties and clarifications, additions and/or amendments to the UNFCCC Guidelines will need to take account of this.

D. Future revisions

12. Any clarifications, additions and/or amendments and future revisions to the UNFCCC Guidelines, will need to take into account the actions required by several articles of the Kyoto Protocol. These include, in particular: Article 2, with respect to development of ways of improving comparability and transparency of information on policies and measures; Article 5, relating to the establishment of national systems and methodologies for the estimation of anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of all greenhouse gases not controlled by the Montreal Protocol; Article 7, with regard to supplementary information for the purpose of ensuring compliance with Article 3; and Article 8, concerning guidelines for the review of implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. A proposal by the Chairmen of the SBI and the SBSTA for the allocation of work on actions required under the Kyoto Protocol in preparation for the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, is contained in document FCCC/SB/1998/1.

V. POSSIBLE ACTION BY THE SUBSIDIARY BODY FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVICE

13. Taking into account the ongoing activities requested by the SBSTA, at its seventh session (FCCC/SBSTA/1998/4), and inputs from other bodies, such as the IPCC, the SBSTA is invited to take note of the ongoing methodological work and work related to the comparison of national GHG inventories with authoritative sources, and to note their relevance to the consideration of any clarifications, additions and/or amendments to the UNFCCC Guidelines.

14. The SBSTA, in examining possible approaches with respect to clarifications, additions and/or amendments to the UNFCCC Guidelines, may wish to consider, *inter alia*, the following questions related to the timing and nature of any such changes:

(a) Is the current structure of the UNFCCC Guidelines appropriate? If not, what categories should be added or deleted?

(b) Should the current approach employing mandatory and optional reporting of information be continued? If not, what approach should be adopted?

(c) How should the current UNFCCC Guidelines be modified in view of information that may be required for subsequent national communications and by the Kyoto Protocol?

(d) Do different approaches need to be considered for different sections of the UNFCCC Guidelines? If so, what strategies should be adopted to obtain the relevant information?

(e) What schedule should be adopted for revisions of the UNFCCC Guidelines?

(f) Should a major revision or clarifications to the current guidelines be considered by the COP at its fourth session?

15. The SBSTA may also wish to invite Parties to submit to the secretariat, by 15 August 1998, their views on possible clarifications, additions and/or amendments to all aspects of the UNFCCC Guidelines as well as the nature and timing of future revisions. These views should take into account the longer-term requirements of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, the issues identified in this note and, in particular, the questions mentioned in the preceding paragraph. Views submitted by Parties could then be compiled by the secretariat into a miscellaneous document for consideration by the SBSTA at its ninth session.

16. The SBSTA may further wish to request the secretariat, with the assistance of experts from the roster, to prepare, for consideration at its ninth session, a document based on submissions by Parties, on any issues which may be identified by the secretariat and on the conclusions of the experts on the matter. This document would, in particular, identify any clarifications, additions and/or amendments that could be made to the UNFCCC Guidelines as well as the proposed approach to the nature and timing of future revisions of the UNFCCC Guidelines.

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